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1922

MICHAL

A PLAY

ALICE CARTER COOK

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MICHAL

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A PLAYLET OF THE TIME OF DAVID

BY

ALICE CARTER COOK

BOSTON
THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY
1922

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TO

R. R. T.

CHARACTERS

MICHAL, *the daughter of Saul.*

MERAB, *her sister.*

JONATHAN. *her brother.*

SAUL, *the son of Kish.*

ABNER, *Captain of the hosts of Israel, his brother.*

KISH.

DAVID, *the son of Jesse.*

ABDIEL, *the lover of Merab.*

MAID, ARMOR BEARER, SOLDIERS.

ACT I, about 1060 B. C.

SCENE ONE: before the house of Kish.

SCENE TWO: the desert hill-country of Judæa.

ACT II, two years later.

SCENE ONE: house of Saul.

SCENE TWO: the same.

ACT I.

SCENE ONE: *Outskirts of a village of Palestine. House of* KISH *in the background.*

(*Enter* JONATHAN, *carrying a bow which he bends as he walks. Stopping a few paces from the house, he looks back impatiently and calls loudly.*)

JONATHAN. Michal! Michal! Why tarriest thou with the quiver?

MICHAL. (*Within.*) I come, brother.

JONATHAN. (*Testily.*) The feet of a woman linger in the house of her father but the feet of a man haste to stand on the earth that the Lord hath made.

(*Enter* MICHAL, *bearing the quiver.*)

JONATHAN. Knowest thou not, Michal, that the armor bearer who lingereth by the way is a reproach? When the bow saith to the arrow, "I have no need of thee," it is time for the armor bearer to loiter.

MICHAL. True, brother; but when the cakes say to the fire, "I have no need of thee," then may thine armor bearer follow thee instantly, but lo! thou who wilt have no honey cakes but of my baking, thou must e'en have patience with thine armor bearer.

JONATHAN. Honey cakes! Hast them by thee, sister?

MICHAL. (*Temptingly opening the capacious bag that hangs by her side.*) Yea, but thou must first do penance for thy fault finding.

JONATHAN. Forgive me, sister! I did but jest.

MICHAL. Bow down thyself, O son of Saul, as one who has sinned.

JONATHAN. (*Jerkily bending.*) Thy pardon, maiden . . . and thy cakes!

(MICHAL *chooses and presents a very small cake.*)

JONATHAN. (*Swallowing it at a gulp.*) Another, sister; 'twas but a little one.

MICHAL. And 'twas but a small bow. Bow the knee, Jonathan, with all humility and say, "'I crave thy pardon, sweet sister."

(JONATHAN *laughingly makes deep abeisance and kisses his sister's outstretched hand.*)

JONATHAN. I do beseech thee, pardon thy servant . . . Since when wast thou a princess, my sister? —And now, my cakes!—and then to my shooting!

(MICHAL *presents the bag.* JONATHAN *helps himself liberally, then stoops to choose an arrow from the quiver.* MICHAL, *meanwhile, looks searchingly up and down the road as if expecting some one.*)

MICHAL. Our father tarrieth long.

JONATHAN. (*Carelessly.*) He who must follow the whims of an ass needs travel far.

MICHAL. He hath been three days gone. Fearest thou not that the wild beasts of the desert may have fallen upon him?

JONATHAN. (*Fitting an arrow to his bow and talking with his mouth full of honey cake.*) Nay, nay, I fear naught for my father. There lives not the beast that can harm him.

MICHAL. Truly he hath the valor of ten men, but even the brave must sleep.

JONATHAN. Fear is the portion of women. I tell thee, Michal, naught can harm our father. What he hath set himself to do that will he do, though every rock of the desert were a lion; neither will he return till he hath found that for which he seeketh, though the shoes fall from his feet and his beard wax long as the beard of Samson, the son of Manoah. Behold now! (*Pointing beyond the stage.*) Seest the topmost leaf of yonder sapling? If my arrow sever it not from its stem, I will eat unleavened bread forty days!

(*He shoots.* MICHAL *peers eagerly into the distance, then, with a shout of joy, "A hit! A hit!" rushes out, immediately returning with the arrow.*)

JONATHAN. (*Trying to look unconcerned.*) Would that yon leaf had been the head of a Philistine! Knowest, sister, that my father hath promised that when next the hosts of Israel go against the enemy, I shall go with them?

MICHAL. Woe, then, to the Philistines! There is none among all the lads of Israel who can shoot like unto thee.

JONATHAN. And my father hath said that I shall bear his bow.

MICHAL. The mighty bow that hangeth ever obove his bed?

JONATHAN. What other?

MICHAL. I have heard it said that there are not ten men in Israel who can bend that bow.

JONATHAN. Yet can I do it.

MICHAL. The Philistines shall tremble before thee, my brother.

JONATHAN. I fear them not. Would that I might fall upon them as a wolf upon a flock in the stillness of the night. They should fall as leaves in the winds of autumn.

MICHAL. O Jonathan! Behold how even now the wind stirreth the leaves of the aspen that they do shine like the helmets of a host that cometh against us! Shoot, brother, shoot! for the Philistines are upon us!

(JONATHAN, *instantly falling into the spirit of the challenge, begins shooting fast and furious,* MICHAL *supplying the arrows and shouting with delight as her eyes follow their flight behind the scene. When the quiver is empty,* JONATHAN *lowers his bow and speaks proudly.*)

JONATHAN. The dogs have licked the dust. Fetch the arrows, armor bearer!

(MICHAL *runs forward, colliding violently with* ABNER, *who arrayed in the full panoply of war, is instantaneously robbed of dignity and breath and nearly overthrown.*)

ABNER. (*Gasping and indignant.*) Is it thus that

the daughter of my brother greeteth me? Is the maid bereft of reason?

MICHAL. (*With a comprehensive sweep of her arms.*) Oh, mine uncle, behold the slaughter of the Philistines!

ABNER. (*Rubbing his eyes and looking around curiously.*) What meaneth the damsel?

MICHAL. They have fallen as in a tempest before the arrows of Jonathan. He hath brought them low. In the pride of their hearts did they imagine mischief against us, but the hand of the mighty hath laid them in the dust.

ABNER. (*Utterly bewildered.*) This is the folly of madness. (*To* JONATHAN.) Where is this enemy?

JONATHAN. (*Laughingly pointing in the direction taken by the arrows.*) They do lick the dust, my uncle. We do but jest. Michal would have it that we shoot down the hosts of the aspen.

MICHAL. And his arm hath not failed. See how they do strew the ground.

JONATHAN. (*Loftily.*) Enough, Michal. Fetch the arrows.

ABNER. (*His eyes now epened, glances admiringly at the fallen leaves.*) It is well done, boy. Thou art the son of thy father before whom the Philistines flee as hares before the hunter. Where is now thy father?

JONATHAN. He hath been absent three days, seeking the asses of Kish. (*Calling to* MICHAL.) Are there not many arrows behind thee, Michal? (*To* ABNER.) Truly I know not wherefore my father

tarrieth so long, yet would I not that my sister be downcast.

ABNER. Saul no doubt travelleth in safety. None would dare to molest him, yet it grieveth me that he is not here for I would see him on weighty matters. The enemy presseth heavily upon us and I have need of him, and of thee also, Jonathan, my lad, for thy father did boast to me of thy skill.

JONATHAN. Hath my father spoken well of me to thee? I am but a stripling, nevertheless will I not shame his words and my heart is strong to do battle for the people of the Lord.

ABNER. Thou art a goodly youth and hast the strength of many men. Thou shalt go with me against these dogs of Philistines. In all the land have I found none so skilful as thou save only a youth of the tribe of Benjamin, a son of Jesse, who dwelleth in Bethlehem.

JONATHAN. Eliab do I know and Abinadab of the sons of Jesse, who have come up unto Gilgal to the feast, and goodlier men did mine eyes never look upon.

(MICHAL, *returning with the arrows, and bringing also a handful of leaves which she lays proudly at* JONATHAN'S *feet, listens eagerly.*)

ABNER. The youngest who remaineth at home with the flocks surpasseth all his brethren in strength and courage. Yea, the rumor goeth abroad that when a lion taketh a lamb from the flock, David, the son of Jesse, goeth after the beast and delivereth the lamb from its mouth and slayeth the lion with his hand.

MICHAL. Neither would Jonathan quail before the lion, my uncle. I would fain see this shepherd.

JONATHAN. Would that such a one were my brother!

MICHAL. I would bear his quiver also! O my uncle, why did the Lord not make me also a *son* of Saul?

JONATHAN. Who would then make my honey cakes?

MICHAL. (*Stamping her foot.*) Jest not, Jonathan! Jesting is a light matter to a man but woe to the woman who must bear the heart of a warrior in the body of a maker of cakes!

JONATHAN. There is none among the daughters of Israel who can make cakes like unto those of the daughter of Saul. Give of them to our uncle, I pray thee, Michal, for he is wearied with his journeyings.

MICHAL. That will I most gladly. Rest thee, my uncle, under this tree, and I will fetch thee a little water to wash thy feet and a morsel of wild honey to eat with the cakes.

(MICHAL *hastens away while* JONATHAN *helps his uncle to disarm and spreads his cloak under the tree for him to sit upon.*)

ABNER. (*To* MICHAL *who has returned with a basin of water and is washing his feet.*) Where is Kish, my father?

MICHAL. Behold, he resteth within the house. Presently shall he come unto thee with Merab, my sister. (*Drying* ABNER'S *feet.*) Now will I bring thee a morsel of food that thou mayst go thy way refreshed.

ABNER. (*Stretching comfortably under the tree.*) So do as thou hast said, my daughter, for I am both weary and an-hungered. (MICHAL *hurries away again and* ABNER *turns to* JONATHAN.) It is strange that thy father tarrieth so long in his search.

JONATHAN. Yea, it is as I have said. The hill country hides robbers and wild beasts and my mind misgives me that all is not well with Saul, my father. My heart is heavy because of him, nevertheless would I not grieve my sister with vain forebodings.

ABNER. The God of our father Abraham forbid that evil should befall Saul, my brother!

JONATHAN. Jehovah preserve him! There is not his like among all the fathers of Israel.

ABNER. Thou sayest truly. His children would we all be.

JONATHAN. What meanest thou?

ABNER. O son of Saul, knowest thou not that the elders of the people have gathered themselves together to the prophet Samuel in Ramah, saying, "Behold thou art old and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations, to go out before us and to fight out battles."

JONATHAN. Yea, that have I heard, and truly it seemeth good to me that we also should have a king over us like all the nations.

ABNER. It is the will of Jehovah and soon will Samuel declare unto us the manner of our king and even now the rumor goeth forth that there is none among the sons of Israel like unto Saul, the son of Kish.

JONATHAN. My father! It cannot be that my father shall be king over Israel!

ABNER. There is none among all the people so goodly, no, nor any man of such valor as Saul who from his shoulders upward is higher than any of the people.

(JONATHAN *stands dumbfounded.* ABNER *watches him in silence.* MICHAL *comes from the house with hands laden.*)

MICHAL. (*Setting the viands before* ABNER.) See, my uncle, here is wild honey and mare's milk and cheese and parched grain and raisins. Eat I pray thee, and be comforted and, after the manner of our fathers in the wilderness, let nothing be left over, that we may know of a truth that thou art a mighty man of valor.

(ABNER *falls upon the food voraciously,* JONATHAN *standing by and* MICHAL *hovering around with words of encouragement.*)

MICHAL. The cheese, mine uncle, neglect not the cheese! My sister hath made it but now of goat's milk. She said in her heart, "Lo, I have now much cheese laid up for many days," but she knew not that Abner, the captain of the hosts of Israel, would fall upon it. Make an end of it utterly, mine uncle, for truly it is the enemy of my brother Jonathan who cannot stand before it.

ABNER. (*With his mouth full.*) Woe betide me, Michal, if I leave of it one iota to bring pain unto thy brother, for he is but a youth.

MICHAL. And forget not the wild honey, my uncle. That also Jonathan doth devour to his own hurt.

Deny not thyself, I pray thee, for the sake of Jonathan, the son of thy brother Saul.

JONATHAN. O Michal! Michal! I prithee, peace! Weary not our uncle with vain words! What thinkest thou he hath said unto me?

MICHAL. What Abner, the captain of the host and the brother of my father, hath said, that will my soul believe, for he it is that saveth Israel from her enemies.

ABNER. I am but the captain of the host, Michal.

MICHAL. But the captain of the host! Who in all the land is greater than thou?

JONATHAN. None but the king, my sister.

MICHAL. What sayest thou, Jonathan? There is no king in Israel save Jehovah and Samuel is his prophet.

ABNER. Samuel waxeth old and the land crieth out by reason of the Philistines and the people will have a king to rule over them.

MICHAL. Who is he that will be king over Israel?

JONATHAN. What manner of man should be king over us, Michal?

MICHAL. Nay, brother Jonathan, who am I that I should know aught of these things? The daughter of Saul knoweth but the house of her father where Saul, who careth for the oxen of his father, is king and where thou, my brother, art his right hand. What know I of a king in Israel?

JONATHAN. Is not Saul, our father, a goodly man, who, from his shoulders upward is higher than any of the people?

MICHAL. Yea, truly; who goodlier?

ABNER. There is none among the people like unto him. Jehovah will choose him to reign over us.

MICHAL. Saul! My father! Nay, nay, it cannot be!

ABNER. The lot shall be cast and the chosen of the Lord shall be revealed.

JONATHAN. Jehovah exalteth the lowly, Michal. Abner saith that the people will have Saul to rule over them.

MICHAL. (*Running towards the house, calls loudly.*) Merab! Merab!

MERAB. (*Coming to the door.*) Thou callest me, my sister?

MICHAL. Oh, come hither, Merab! Hear the words of Abner, the captain of the host!

MERAB. (*Approaching with outstretched hands.*) Welcome is the brother of my father and the protector of the people!

ABNER. Peace be with thee, my daughter Merab!

MICHAL. Declare unto her, my uncle, how greatly Jehovah hath exalted us.

ABNER. Nay, nay, Michal; be not too hasty. We know not what a day may bring forth. That which shall come to pass is in the hands of the Lord of Hosts.

MICHAL. Blessed be His name. Nevertheless Merab also should know that which is in the hearts of the people.

MERAB. (*Looking inquiringly from one to another.*) What is this great thing that is hidden from me?

MICHAL. O Merab, Abner saith that the people will have our father, Saul, to be king over Israel.

MERAB. My sister! What sayest thou?

ABNER. Michal, perchance, speaketh hastily, nevertheless is it true that the people will have a king to rule over them and there is none so worthy as Saul, thy father.

MICHAL. And thou shalt be a princess, Merab! And thou shalt wed the son of a king!

MERAB. And thou, Michal, shalt put away childish things and dwell in the palace of the king with thy maidens.

MICHAL. Nay, nay, Merab! I will not abide in the palace, spinning at the loom and decking myself with royal apparel! Nay! Wed thou thy prince and live softly all thy days; but, as for me, I will be the armor bearer of my brother, Jonathan, and I will wed . . . I will wed . . . let me consider well, for woe unto her who maketh haste to wed! (*Laughing whimsically, she looks roguishly at* JONATHAN *and* ABNER.) . . . yea, why should I not wed this shepherd, David, who is a comely youth and valiant and who dwelleth with the flocks? Better is the palace of God among the hills than the palaces of men.

JONATHAN. O Michal! Michal! Thou speakest like a foolish virgin, not as one who shall be the daughter of a king.

KISH. (*Within, querously.*) Merab! Merab!

MERAB. (*Hastening towards the house.*) Yea, my father!

(KISH, *bowed with age, comes to the door.* MICHAL *and* MERAB *lead him gently towards* ABNER, *who rises to greet him.*)

KISH. The peace of God be with thee, my son. Hast thou seen aught of thy brother, Saul?

ABNER. Nay, my father. I knew not that my brother journeyed in the hill country, but fear thou not. The Lord is with him.

KISH. What shall I do for my son? Lo, it is now the third day and he cometh not. Peradventure an evil beast hath devoured him. Saul, my son, is no doubt rent in pieces.

ABNER. Fear not, my father. Saul shall return in the fulness of time. It is no light matter to find the asses in the wilderness, nevertheless Saul hath the wisdom of the serpent and he will find them, nor will he give himself a prey to the beasts of the desert.

KISH. Deceive me not with vain words. Saul is no doubt rent in pieces. Go, Abner, search out the desert and bring me his cloak, even as the sons of Jacob did bring the coat of Joseph for a witness that the wild beasts had devoured their brother.

ABNER. Nay, my father; thou dost forget; the wild beasts harmed not our father Joseph. Jehovah, who brought unto him a great deliverance, shall also restore unto thee thy son, Saul.

KISH. The Lord hath taken him, Abner. My gray hairs shall go down in sorrow to the grave. Bring me, I pray thee, the garments of my son.

ABNER. (*Aside to* JONATHAN.) It is the foolishness of an old man. Saul will return and I must make haste to the prophet, Samuel, who hath summoned me to meet him his day at Ramah.

JONATHAN. Go thy way. I will seek my father.

(*To* KISH.) It shall be as thou wilt, my father. Abner goeth to the prophet Samuel, who shall tell him that which cometh to pass, and I will seek my father in the wilderness and will not return until I bring thee word concerning him.

KISH. (*Falling on* JONATHAN'S *neck, weeps with the abandon of weak old age.*) The God of our fathers guide thy steps! If evil befall Saul, my son, my gray hairs shall go down with sorrow to Sheol.

JONATHAN. (*To* KISH.) Be comforted, my father. Jehovah shall restore him who is lost. Come, now, I pray thee, return to thy rest.

(MERAB *and* MICHAL *lead the old man away.* JONATHAN *helps* ABNER *to put on his armor.*)

ABNER. Farewell, Jonathan, my son. May the God of our fathers guide thee.

(ABNER *goes out.* JONATHAN *lays aside his bow, girds himself and is about to set forth, when* MICHAL *reappears, wrapped in a cloak.*)

MICHAL. I will go with thee, my brother.

JONATHAN. Nay, Michal; tarry thou here with Merab and the old man.

MICHAL. I will go with thee. Peradventure the wild beasts have devoured my father.

(*She weeps and* JONATHAN *tries awkwardly to comfort her.*)

JONATHAN. Be not afraid, little one. Our father is a lion among lions. He shall not be harmed. I will seek him and return speedily.

MICHAL. I will go with thee.

JONATHAN. The way is long and hard.

MICHAL. Love is stronger than the rocks of the way, neither can many floods quench it. I *will* go with thee.

JONATHAN. Come then, my sister; let us hasten while the day is at the spring lest the night overtake us in the desert.

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO: *Hill country of Judæa; a rocky, steep ascent with scrubby growths bordering the rough path. Evening.*

(*Enter* JONATHAN *and* MICHAL, *dusty and weary.* JONATHAN *gives his sister his hand to help her up the ascent.*)

MICHAL. Where are we?

JONATHAN. I know not; nevertheless this path is travelled of the flocks and we shall doubtless find shelter in the hut of some shepherd.

MICHAL. I can go no further. Let us rest among these rocks. When we have slept a space we may continue our journey.

JONATHAN. We may not sleep here. Wild beasts prowl in these thickets and robbers infest the caves. We needs must go on, lest night overtake us and we perish in this wilderness.

MICHAL. Do thou go on, but as for me, I must rest and sleep though it be the sleep of death.

JONATHAN. I will carry thee, my sister.

(*He takes* MICHAL *in his arms and tries to climb but stumbles and almost falls.* MICHAL, *frightened, struggles from his grasp.*)

MICHAL. Thou canst not carry me. Thy feet are bruised and bleeding even as mine and thou art also weary. Let us rest here until the dawn.

JONATHAN. It shall be as thou wilt. Night cometh on apace and it were easy to lose the path in the darkness. Better to remain here though lions lurk near to fall upon us, than to dash ourselves to pieces from the cliffs.

(*He finds a sheltered place, takes off his cloak and spreads it on the ground and helps* MICHAL *to make herself comfortable upon it.*)

MICHAL. (*Recovering her vivacity.*) Give me now a pillow of stone; then shall I be assured of sleep as was our father Jacob.

JONATHAN. (*Finding a smooth stone, places it under her head.*) And, like our father Jacob, mayest thou be visited by angels, my sister!

MICHAL. Alas! The spirit of woman is never content. As the earth that is never satisfied with water and the fire that saith not "Enough," so doth the spirit of woman cry, "Give! Give!" and lo! I am athirst, my brother, and must I perish in the wilderness where no water is?

JONATHAN. (*Rising from the seat he had found for himself.*) Alas! Michal! There is no fountain among these rocks and I dare not leave thee to seek water, yet will I go a little way, for better to die by the mouth of the lion than to perish by the slow torture of thirst.

(*He goes out. Twilight falls.* MICHAL, *rising to her knees, prays.*)

MICHAL. God of our fathers, have mercy upon thy children! Guide thou the feet of thy servant, Jona-

than, that he may find a spring of living waters that shall restore our souls. Guide Thou the feet of our father, Saul, that he may return unto the house which his going has left desolate. Have mercy upon thy handmaid and deliver her from the dangers of the wilderness. May Thy peace abide with us forevermore!

(*Rising from her knees,* MICHAL *takes from under her cloak a bag from which she produces cakes, cheese and raisins. These she sets out on a flat stone. Surveying her work with satisfaction, she covers the viands with her kerchief and sits down so as to conceal the improvised table.*)

MICHAL. Now shall the soul of my brother be astonished and his lips speechless with amazement.

(JONATHAN *appears at the foot of the hill, climbing wearily and evidently discouraged. He stops suddenly and kneels beside a hollow stone; takes off his kerchief and dips it in the hollow where the dews of evening have collected.*)

JONATHAN. The Lord is ever mindful of his own. Thanks be to the Almighty God of our fathers who maketh the water to come out of the rock for us even as for his people in the days of Moses when they also wandered in the desert.

(*He climbs quickly to where* MICHAL *sits and wrings the water from the cloth into her mouth.*)

MICHAL. It is sufficient; now am I content.

JONATHAN. Michal, thou art but a woman and content with the dews of heaven. I, being a man, would be grateful for stronger meat.

MICHAL. Thy prayer is heard, O son of Saul, and, if thou be'st of humble mind, I will give thee bread.

JONATHAN. Art thou a sorcerer to make bread from the stones of the desert?

MICHAL. Nay, but being a wise maid in the house of my father, and knowing the everlasting hunger of mankind, have I made many honey cakes.

JONATHAN. Saidst thou not that the bag was empty?

MICHAL. Is there but one bag in Israel, O son of Saul?

(*She rises and removes the cover from the viands.*)

JONATHAN (*Astonished, speaks in mock anger.*) Verily thou hast dealt deceitfully with thy brother, O daughter of mischief.

MICHAL. Speak not lightly of her who carrieth the bag. When I returned into the house to prepare for the journey, I fetched the bag, but, of a truth, hadst thou had knowledge of it, there had not now remained one crumb to appease thy hunger at the even time and we should have died of famine.

JONATHAN. Twice have I prayed forgiveness because of these cakes and now a third time do I penance. (*Bows humbly.*) Give me to eat, I pray thee, sweet sister; it shall be as manna to my hungry soul.

MICHAL. (*As they eat.*) Truly do we repeat the story of our fathers. We sleep upon a pillow of stones.

We drink water from the rock and we eat bread in the wilderness where is no bread.

JONATHAN. (*Carefully disposing of the last crumb.*) Now is the spirit of the mighty returned to me. Though a lion rise up and roar against me, I would rend him as a kid.

MICHAL. Of a truth do wild beasts lurk among these rocks?

JONATHAN. Yea, my sister, but fear them not. I will guard thee from all evil.

MICHAL. I fear them not, Jonathan, yet do I fear lest they have fallen upon our father.

JONATHAN. Thinkest thou not that our father can withstand them even as I and thou sayest thou hast no fear with me? Is not my father greater than I?

MICHAL. Yes, verily, yet he is but one.

JONATHAN. He hath not the protection of thy arm! Truly he is in evil case! Yet do I believe that even without thine aid he may withstand the dangers of the desert!

MICHAL. Jest not, brother. He must sleep even as we, and who shall guard his slumber?

JONATHAN. Jehovah careth for them who put their trust in Him. Shall Saul not be king over Israel and who shall harm the Lord's anointed?

MICHAL. In Jehovah will I put my trust. Now will I sleep while thou dost watch and when I have rested a space do thou waken me that thou mayst sleep in thy turn.

(*She wraps her cloak about her and sleeps.*
JONATHAN *tries manfully to watch but is*

overcome and sleeps also. Night darkens. The tinkle of sheep bells and the barking of dogs is heard in the valley below. The sounds draw nearer. A man, indistinctly seen, emerges at the top of the path and turns back to call directions to the dogs which are folding the sheep in the valley. Gradually the sounds subside and the stranger seats himself on a rock and takes the harp that hangs on his shoulders, tunes it softly and begins to sing. The sleepers, wakened, listen spell-bound.)

SONG

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills
From whence cometh my help;
My help cometh from the Lord
Which made heaven and earth.
The Lord is my keeper,
The Lord is my shade upon my right hand.
Behold! He that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep!

(*The singer pauses. The moon rises.* MICHAL *and* JONATHAN *watch but when the singer begins a new song, gradually fall asleep.*)

SONG

The heavens declare the glory of God
And the firmament showeth his handiwork;
Day unto day uttereth speech
And night unto night showeth knowledge;
There is no speech nor language,
There voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber
And rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.

(*The song ended, the harper sits musing. After a time he rises and slowly descends the hill and comes upon the sleepers. He stops, amazed, and, stooping, looks on the face of* MICHAL *across which the moonlight falls.*)

SHEPHERD. Thou art fair, O my dove, hidden in the cleft of the rocks, in the covert of the steep place. Would that I might hear thy voice, for thy countenance is comely! Truly, O beautiful one, thou sleepest in the arms of Death, for these hills abound in ravening beasts. I will watch by thee.

(*He sits quietly watching. The moon sinks low and it becomes very dark. Occasionally a dog barks or a sheep bleats in the valley below. Suddenly there is a rustling sound and the fall of a heavy body, followed by* MICHAL'S *screams and the rush of retreating feet..*)

SHEPHERD. A lion! A lion! Give me thy strength, O God!

JONATHAN. My sister! My sister! Where art thou?

(*The darkness is filled with the shouts of the men as they rush to the rescue. Absolute silence follows. Slowly the darkness gives way to the faint light of dawn, revealing* JONATHAN *and the* SHEPHERD *gently laying the limp body of* MICHAL *on her stony couch, or, if that is too difficult,* MICHAL *is already placed on the rocks and the men stoop over her.* JONATHAN *tries to rouse her, while the*

SHEPHERD, *with a gesture of despair, withdraws reverently into the background.*)

JONATHAN. Awake! Awake! My sister! Awake, my sister, my dove! Let me hear thy voice! Be not silent before me, O my sister! (*Pause.* JONATHAN *puts his ear to* MICHAL'S *heart.*) My little sister is dead. She speaketh not. She heareth not. Awake, O my little one! Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow! The joy of the whole world hath been thrown down and hath not been pitied.

(*In hopeless despair, he sits on the ground, tearing his hair and rending his garments. The* SHEPHERD *approaches and bends over* MICHAL.)

JONATHAN. O Jehovah! Behold to whom thou hast done this! Thou hast slain in the day of thine anger; thou hast slaughtered and hast not pitied!

SHEPHERD. Blaspheme not the name of the Almighty. The Lord Omnipotent reigneth. Call upon him in the time of trouble for in His hands are the issues of life and death. He gave and shall He not take away? Blessed be the name of the Lord.

JONATHAN. (*With bowed head.*) She was altogether lovely. Among the daughters of Israel was there none like unto my little one. Jehovah hath accomplished his wrath. He hath poured out his fierce anger. She who was the breath of our nostrils was overthrown in a moment. The joy of our hearts hath ceased.

SHEPHERD. (*Kneeling beside* MICHAL, *prays.*) O

Jehovah, forget not thy children. Turn thou unto us and let thy mighty works be shown to us!

(MICHAL *stirs slightly.*)

JONATHAN. (*Head still bowed.*) The Lord hath trodden as in a wine press the daughter of Israel.

SHEPHERD. (*Who has been watching intently, again sees* MICHAL *stir slightly. He springs to his feet.*) She lives! Praise the Almighty God! She lives! She lives! Arise, my brother! Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever!

(JONATHAN *hastens to* MICHAL, *his companion steps aside and stands respectfully behind him in the gray light of coming dawn.*)

JONATHAN. She lives! She lives! God of our fathers, forgive the iniquity of thy servant! I will praise thy name at all times; thy name shall continually be in my mouth.

MICHAL. (*Opening her eyes and looking up at her brother.*) Where am I?

JONATHAN. Thou art returned from the land of Death, my sister.

(*The light which has been slowly growing, suddenly bursts in a flood of glory over the hilltops as* MICHAL'S *eyes wander to the spot where the harper stands in the background, watching.*)

MICHAL. Who is that stranger?

JONATHAN. (*Still not turning his head, his eyes seeming unable to leave the face of his sister.*) It is

he who hath saved thee from the jaws of the lion, Michal.

(*As he speaks,* JONATHAN *turns to address the stranger, but, in that instant,* MICHAL *cries out and, looking, in the opposite direction they see a tall man, surrounded by a group of prophets bearing torches, approaching.* JONATHAN, *not having seen the* SHEPHERD'S *face, hurries towards the new comers.*)

MICHAL. (*Sitting erect and stretching out her arms to the tall traveller.*) My father! O my father!

(SHEPHERD *disappears, as* SAUL *hastens to his daughter.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE ONE: *Living apartment in the house of* KING SAUL. *Two years later.*

(MICHAL *sits by the loom, her hands idly folded in her lap, her eyes looking absently far away.*)

MICHAL. By night in dreams I behold him whom my soul loveth; by day have I sought him in the streets of the city and in the broad ways, but I find him not.

(*Enter* MERAB. MICHAL *rises and greets her affectionately.*)

MERAB. Art still downcast, little sister?

MICHAL. Smileth the morn when the sun delayeth his coming?

MERAB. Foolish one! Is there but one shepherd in Israel? Nay, what is a shepherd to the daughter of Saul? Shall the child of the king set her affections upon one who careth for the flocks?

MICHAL. The heart knoweth not high nor low, my sister, and truly my soul wanders like a sheep that is lost till the shepherd shall gather it into the fold of his love. It knoweth its own shepherd and none other will it follow.

MERAB. It were more meet that thou shouldst give thy love to a man of war.

MICHAL. O sister, may Jehovah give thee Abdiel, the Meholathite, the warrior who is the desire of thy heart, but my soul is bound in the bundle of life with him who hath saved me from the jaws of the lion.

MERAB. The anger of our father will be kindled against thee, Michal, for he would fain bind unto himself those who have power, nor will the lowly find favor in his sight.

MICHAL. Did not our father follow after the oxen of Kish?

MERAB. Of a truth; yet now is he lifted up above the people and his heart hath waxed proud within him.

MICHAL. Nevertheless are we still his daughters. Doth the heart of a king forget that the joy of a father is in the happiness of his children?

MERAB. Alas, my sister! The glory of his kingdom weigheth more to the mind of the king than the love of his children. What he willeth that shall be done though the hearts of his daughters be crushed within them.

MICHAL. Truly an evil spirit from the Lord troubleth him, yet is his heart not altogether changed for it is softened by the music of the strange harper. Mine eyes long to behold him before whom the evil spirit of my father fleeth away, for when this musician playeth before the king the spirit of evil is banished and the heart of Saul becometh humble as that of a little child.

MERAB. I would also see this David, yet may none have sight of him for he returneth ever by day to his flocks, for he also is a shepherd, sister.

MICHAL. And he is a mighty man of valor. Jonathan saith that our father will make him his armor bearer.

MERAB. Woe to the shepherd who hath not the strength of a warrior for the land is scourged with wild beasts as with Philistines.

MICHAL. What saith Abdiel of the champion of the Philistines?

MERAB. Abdiel saith that this fellow cometh ever to the crest of the mountain, crying with a voice that is like the blast of a whirlwind, "I defy the armies of Israel. Give me a man that we may fight together. O ye servants of Saul, choose you a man for you and let him come down to me in the valley and if I prevail not against him we will be your servants."

MICHAL. And Saul, our father, and all Israel are dismayed and greatly afraid of him.

MERAB. Yea, there lives not a man who can stand before him.

MICHAL. Wherefore goeth not Abdiel against this dog of a Philistine?

MERAB. Thou speakest thou knowest not what. Is not his height six cubits and a span and the staff of his spear like unto a weaver's beam? Of a truth Abdiel desired to go against him but I rebuked him, saying, "Thou lovest me not at all, O Abdiel. I know the pride of thy heart and that thou wouldst perish by the hand of this monster, leaving me alone to fall into the hands of the Philistines."

MICHAL. And what said Abdiel, the Meholathite?

MERAB. Abdiel did answer me saying, "Let me die

for thee with honor, my beloved, rather than live in shame before the face of man."

MICHAL. Abdiel is strong and of good courage and verily he would slay this giant. Wherefore went he not forth to meet him?

MERAB. Should the crown of Israel be thrown unto the dogs? Who can stand before this Philistine? He that is courageous among the mighty doth flee before him. I said unto Abdiel, "If thou wilt of a truth not hearken unto me but wilt go forth to meet Goliath, thy love for me is but the flame of a torch that is extinguished by the first breath of the wind, and I swear by my soul thou shalt not have me to wife. In the naughtiness of thy heart wilt thou do this thing because thou prizest the praise of men more than the sweetness of love; but in vain shalt thou draw thy sword, for if thou lovest thine own glory above the prayer of my soul thou shalt verily be brought into contempt.

MICHAL. And what said Abdiel, the Meholothite?

MERAB. (*Hanging her head.*) He said, "Breath of my life, I cannot love thee truly if I fail in aught that can help Israel. I shall fight this Philistine."

MICHAL. And wherefore hath Abdiel been neglectful of the vow that he did make?

MERAB. (*Hanging her head.*) Truly, he hath not fulfilled his vow. (*Raising her head and laughing bitterly and speaking defiantly.*) Nay, and he shall not while Merab, the daughter of Saul, lives to hold him from his rash purpose.

MICHAL. (*Startled by her sister's fierceness.*) What hast thou done, sister?

MERAB. (*After a short pause, speaks reluctantly.*) I will even tell thee. I am young, Michal, and could I live without my love through the long years? Saul, my father, would give me in marriage to one of his captains and I should drag out my days in hate and misery. Nay, without my love could I not live, Michal; and why should he die by the hand of this evil one in the beauty of his youth, and why should I go down to Sheol in mourning?

MICHAL. (*Very gently.*) What hast thou done, sister?

MERAB. (*Hiding her head in her hands and weeping passionately.*) Thou wouldst have done even as I, Michal, hadst he whom thou lovest desired to end his days so rashly.

MICHAL. Tell me, sister.

MERAB. Thou knowest the witch who lives in the cave of Endor? (MICHAL *nods and shrinks.*) Her have I visited and she hath given me a strong potion the which if any man drink, his strength departeth from him and he becomes as a little babe. Abdiel would go forth in the morning to meet Goliath but I have given him to drink and now he lieth in his tent and there is no strength in him.

MICHAL. It is not well done, Merab. Thou hast sinned against the Lord and against the people in this thing.

MERAB. The strength of Abdiel shall come again when I will.

MICHAL. When the children of Israel have been carried into captivity by the Philistines and when our

father and brother must bow down in the tents of their enemies.

MERAB. Why should not Saul fight this battle, or Jonathan? Should not the king and son of the king be the saviors of the people?

MICHAL. Thou knowest that the captains of the host did hold the hands of Saul and Jonathan, forbidding that they should endanger their lives. It is not meet that the king or the son of the king should put their lives in jeopardy.

MERAB. Would that thy shepherd were here by thee that thou mightst send him into the jaws of this wolf.

MICHAL. Were my shepherd here, sister, I would indeed say unto him, "If thou dost love me, bring me the head of this Philistine," and of a truth it should be done. Did he say me nay, he were no love of mine. Shame to thee, Merab, that thou hast brought dishonor upon him whom thou lovest. Peradventure his love may turn to hate and when he is himself once more, he shall curse the hand that stayed his arm.

MERAB. Nay, nay, sister! Thou wilt not betray me! Say thou wilt not betray me!

MICHAL. My tongue is sealed but my spirit is sore within me by reason of the faint heart that liveth in the daughter of Saul.

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID. My mistress, a beggar without desireth speech of thee.

MERAB. Say unto her that I cannot see her.

MAID. She will not be turned away. Money she will not have nor food, neither will she go without

word with thee and there is that in her eye which maketh me to fear. I dared not refuse to bring thee word.

MICHAL. Let us see this woman, sister.

MERAB. Nay, it is some evil fortune teller. I will not see her.

MAID. She doth declare that what she would say to thee hath to do with the welfare of Israel. She will not be denied.

MERAB. I say I will not see her.

MICHAL. Nay, sister, refuse her not. Who can tell? Oft times the Lord of Hosts worketh by lowly instruments.

MERAB. Do thou talk with her, Michal; as for me, I will none of her.

(MERAB *gathers her veil about her and half conceals herself as the* MAID *ushers in a veiled woman who walks feebly and sinks wearily among the pillows of a divan.* MAID *retires at a sign from* MICHAL.)

MICHAL. Woman, what wilt thou?

BEGGAR. (*Rising with great effort, approaches* MERAB, *points an accusing finger at her and speaks hoarsely.*) It is with this woman I would speak, and alone.

MERAB. (*Drawing her veil closer.*) Leave me not, my sister. I will not speak with her.

MICHAL. Fear not to speak with me, woman. I am her sister. What thou wouldst say to her I may safely hear and I will not leave her.

BEGGAR. (*Sullenly.*) As thou wilt; so shalt thou know my shame and hers and the ruin of Israel.

(*Gathering strength, the beggar throws aside her veil and reveals the drawn and haggard features of* ABDIEL. *He stands over* MERAB, *vainly trying in his weakness to threaten her. She shrinks, terrified.*)

ABDIEL. Woman, thou hast bewitched me! What hast thou done? What hast thou done? The curse of God is upon me and my strength is departed from me while the dog of a Philistine walketh abroad through the land!

(*He breaks down, falls back on the divan and sobs.* MERAB *springs toward him and tries to take him in her arms but even in his weakness he rallies and throws her off.*)

ABDIEL. Nay, nay! Touch me not! I am accursed. Thou hast bewitched me . . . Touch me not!

MERAB. Abdiel! Abdiel! My beloved! Thou wouldst have perished by the hand of the enemy. Abdiel, turn not away from me!

ABDIEL. Thou hast brought everlasting shame upon me! The glory of my strength is departed from me and Israel is a prey in the hands of her enemies. I am become an abomination to the Lord. Touch me not!

MERAB. Abdiel! Soul of my soul!

ABDIEL. Speak not vain words. Thou shalt not touch me! Give me back my strength.

MICHAL. Merab, thou hast said that thou hadst it

in thy power to restore that which thou hast taken away.

MERAB. And shall my beloved fall a prey to Goliath, the Philistine?

ABDIEL. Delay not if thou truly hast it in thy power to heal me. Delay not if thy love be not altogether dead. Give me back my strength if thou wouldst not hear me curse the day when mine eyes first saw thee. If thou wilt save my body thou shalt slay my soul. O Merab, I pray thee by the love that I bore thee, by the God of our fathers, by thy hope of eternity, to give back that which thou didst take away, else will I curse thee before I die.

MERAB. Abdiel! Abdiel! My beloved!

(*Hesitatingly, she takes from her bosom a vial and gives it to him. He quaffs eagerly.*)

MERAB. Thy prayer is answered, Abdiel. I have given thee into the arms of Death. Go now and sleep and on the morrow thy strength shall return and thou shalt perish by the hand of Goliath.

ABDIEL. (*Rising, extends his arms to* MERAB, *who puts hers around him and leads him gently towards the door.*) I thank thee, heart's love. Now will I prove to thee how dear thou art to me and tomorrow I will bring thee the head of this Goliath.

(*Enter* JONATHAN, *hastily.* ABDIEL *draws his cloak over his face, but, wishing to avoid notice, does not try to pass him and remains standing near* MERAB.)

JONATHAN. Good news! Good news, my sisters! The Lord hath provided a champion for Israel!

MICHAL. Who hath been chosen of the Lord to bring this great deliverance?

JONATHAN. Even David, the son of Jesse, who doth sing before the king, our father. He is even now arming himself in the tent of the king. May God Almighty give unto him the victory!

MICHAL. Blessed be he among men forevermore!

JONATHAN. Saul, our father, hath promised him that if he bring back the head of Goliath, he shall have the eldest daughter of the king to wife.

MERAB. The Lord have mercy upon me!

ABDIEL. (*Almost falling, but unheld by* MERAB.) It is the judgment of God!

JONATHAN. My sister, be not dismayed; the youth is comely and of great valor.

MERAB. May the spirit of evil destroy him utterly!

JONATHAN. Blaspheme not, Merab. It is fitting that the champion of Israel should wed the daughter of the king.

MERAB. My love have I pledged to Abdiel, the Meholothite, and shall I be false to mine oath?

(ABDIEL *throws off his cloak and steps before* JONATHAN.)

ABDIEL. Yea, I have sworn before Jehovah that Merab shall be mine and none but the Lord God Almighty can separate us.

JONATHAN. The hand of the daughter belongeth to the father and to whom he will shall it be given. Wherefore wentest thou not forth to fight this battle, so hadst thou won the desire of thy heart?

(MERAB *covers her face with her hands.*

(ABDIEL *hangs his head and is silent. He speaks at length in a low, choked voice, more to himself than to the listeners.*)

ABDIEL. It is he judgment of the Lord! Woe! Woe! I am utterly bereft and God, the God of my fathers, has turned away his face from me!

(*Overcome by weakness and grief, he sinks on the divan, and Merab kneels beside him.* JONATHAN *regards him contemptuously, then addresses* MERAB.)

JONATHAN. How should the daughter of the king be given unto one who dared not to fight the enemy of the people? As the king hath commanded so shall it be done. Rebel not against his voice, my sister, but rejoice that thou shalt be given unto him who shall redeem Israel from her enemies. He shall be unto thee a crown of glory. (*Turning to go.*) Farewell, my sisters. Bear your souls in patience, so shall ye presently know the issue of the combat.

(JONATHAN *goes out.* MERAB *tries to fondle* ABDIEL, *who shrinks from her.*)

MERAB. The king will give unto him his eldest daughter! I have sinned in vain! Abdiel! O Abdiel, my heart's love, how have I brought thee low! (*Suddenly changing mood.*) Yet cannot this youth slay the Philistine. Is not his stature nine cubits and a span? Foolish that I am! Abdiel is mine and I am his and naught shall divide us! (*Rising, she helps* ABDIEL *to his feet and speaks to him eagerly.*) This youth cannot slay the Philistine, Abdiel! Go thou to thy tent and sleep and rest and on the morrow shalt thou rise

to slay this giant and I shall be thine—Haste! Haste! Sleep, my beloved, and may the God of our fathers give thee strength to bring deliverance to his people! I will wed none but thee and thou shalt be the savior of Israel!

(ABDIEL, *weakly totters through the door.* MERAB *looks after him, wringing her hands and turning from* MICHAL *who seeks to comfort her.* MICHAL *returns to her loom, but does not work.* MERAB *wanders from one small window to another restlessly, finally returning to the divan and burying her face among the pillows. The sisters sit in silence. Shouts are heard in the distance.* MICHAL *goes to the window. The tumult approaches. Music and singing are heard.* MERAB *shrinks among her pillows.* MICHAL *talks half to herself, half to her sister, as the procession approaches and passes.*)

MICHAL. Lo, the musicians of the king with the psalter and timbrel and harp and the maidens dancing beside them! Lo, the hosts of Israel come with a great shout . . . They come! They come! Lo, the banners of Israel and the horsemen thereof! Lo, the king's guard . . . He cometh! He cometh! The champion of Israel!

(*The tumult increases and just below the window many voices shout "*SAUL *hath slain his thousands but* DAVID *his tens of thousands!"*

MICHAL. (*Leaning far out of the window.*) He cometh! He cometh! The people make way before

him! The banners of the host float round him! Now shall mine eyes behold this shepherd boy who singeth before the king, this sweet singer who knoweth not fear!

(*There is a pause of tense silence, then* MICHAL *turns from the window with a great cry.*)

MICHAL. It is the face of my beloved!

MERAB. (*Springing to her feet.*) What sayest thou?

MICHAL. It is the face of my beloved! Mine eyes hath beheld him . . . fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners . . . He hath looked upon me, Merab, and the love of his heart doth burn in his eyes. O Merab, Merab! It is my shepherd who is the savior of Israel! (MERAB *stands rooted to the floor in amazement and horror.*) Yea, I have found him whom my soul loveth and he is the champion of his people! Praise God who hath brought deliverance to Israel and who restoreth to me the soul of my life!

MERAB. (*Not heeding* MICHAL, *but speaking in a low, horror-stricken voice as if to herself.*) And I shall wed this shepherd!

MICHAL. (*Standing a moment in silent astonishment, then understanding the meaning of the words.*) *Thou* shalt wed this shepherd . . . God forbid!

MERAB. The king hath sworn.

MICHAL. The king is also our father. He will not work this despite to his children.

MERAB. The king is but the king, Michal, and what

he hath sworn that will he execute. I must wed thy shepherd.

MICHAL. Nay, nay, my sister; it shall not come to pass. God will show us a way. In him let us put our trust.

MERAB. (*Shaking her head mournfully.*) I have sinned and the Lord will not have regard to my prayer. I am accursed and thou who art innocent shalt suffer also with me.

MICHAL. He loveth me. I know that he loveth me. His eyes did look into my soul and I am his and I swear thou shalt not wed him.

MERAB. Thou knowest I want him not and thou knowest also that among the children of Israel it is not done to give the younger before the first born, —and the king, our father, hath sworn.

MICHAL. O God of our fathers, have mercy upon thy handmaids!

(*The sisters weep silently in each other's arms. Enter* ABNER.)

ABNER. What is this, my daughters? Behold, all the people of Israel rejoice and sing for joy because of the great deliverance which the Lord hath wrought; only in the house of the king there is mourning as among those who have lost their first born.

MICHAL. Oh, my uncle, my uncle! Give us thine aid, we beseech thee, for sorrow is multiplied unto us.

ABNER. What can I do for thee, my daughter?

MERAB. Our father hath sworn that he would give his elder daughter unto the champion of the people.

ABNER. Yea, truly; and is that a cause for weep-

ing? Thou art greatly favored, O Merab! Peace be unto thee and unto thy house forevermore.

MERAB. I will none of him, mine uncle.

ABNER. Thou wilt not wed this mighty man, Merab? O foolish one; knowest thou not how the Lord hath blessed thee!

MERAB. I have sworn to Abdiel, the Meholothite, that him only would I wed. And, see, mine uncle, Michal doth love this shepherd and shall Merab take unto herself the beloved of her sister. God forbid!

ABNER. Michal doth love this shepherd!

MICHAL. Yea, mine uncle. He it is who hath saved me from the jaws of the lion and him have I sought through all the land.

ABNER. Wonderful are the ways of women and past finding out! Weep not, my children. All shall yet be well with thee. Behold now, Merab doth love Abdiel and Michal hath set her heart upon David . . . yet what doth it signify? A man is but a man. Let Merab wed David, the son of Jesse, acording to the promise of the king, and let Michal wed Abdiel, the Meholothite, and all shall be well with thee . . . They are both comely men and valiant.

MICHAL. Thou knowest naught of the heart of woman, mine uncle. Michal shall wed him whom her heart desireth and not another.

ABNER. Ah, little one, thou speakest the words of youth and folly. I also in the morning of life did set my heart upon a maiden and thought within myself that there was not her like among all the daughters of Israel. Yea, I did wed her in the glory of my

youth but the Lord who knoweth all things did rebuke the boasting of my heart and did take from me Rebecca, the daughter of Ahimaz. Then were my ways darkened and I thought within myself that death were better than life, when, lo! mine eyes fell upon Susanna, the daughter of Nahath, and her took I to wife and behold, she maketh cakes even so good as those of Rebecca, the daughter of Ahimaz, and she hath borne me many children.

MERAB. (*Indignantly.*) Thou knowest not what thou sayest. Thou are a fool, mine uncle, and understandest the heart of woman not at all. I will not wed this shepherd whom my sister loves.

ABNER. (*Nettled.*) Yea, but thou wilt, Merab, for the king hath sworn it.

MICHAL. (*Kneeling and kissing his hands.*) Save us, save us from this accursed thing, O Abner! Thou art the brother of our father. He will listen to thy words. Take counsel with him, I beseech thee, and let him not break the hearts of his daughters as with a rod of iron.

ABNER. Would that I might do thy will in this, my little one, but the heart of the king is hardened and an evil spirit doth dwell within him. He doeth that which seemeth unto him good nor can any man turn him from that which he hath decreed.

MERAB. Plead with him, mine uncle, as a man pleadeth for his life. Say unto him that Michal shall wed this David and that Merab shall be given in mariage to Abdiel.

ABNER. The king will not hearken. I did meet him

by the way and his face was darkened and he looked neither to the right hand not to the left and no man dared to speak with him.

MICHAL. Of a truth he will hearken unto his brother.

ABNER. What is brother or son to him when the spirit of evil speaks within him? He will slay me. He will slay thee, my children, if in aught thou do offend him.

MICHAL. The Lord have mercy upon my father!

MERAB. The Lord of Hosts have mercy upon his handmaids. Turn not from us, O mine uncle. Speak unto our father. Peradventure he will hear thee.

(ABNER *tears himself away from their entreaties, putting his hands to his ears.*)

ABNER. I will do that which in me lies, yet will not the king be moved. (*To himself as he rushes out.*) Let me fall into the hands of the Philistines rather than perish by the lamentations of women who know not the good from evil. Abdiel, the Meholothite, or David, the son of Jesse . . . what signifieth it? Are they not both comely men of their countenances and mighty in valor!

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO: *Same as preceding.*

(*Enter* SAUL, *in royal apparel, wearing crown and carrying spear, and evidently in bad humor. He is followed by an armor bearer who helps him remove his outer garment.* SAUL *assists the operation of freeing himself from encumbrances by violently throwing down his spear.*)

SAUL. Go. I would be alone. Let no man enter. (*Armor bearer retires precipitately.* SAUL *paces the floor angrily.*) King of Israel! What signifieth it to be called King of Israel when the battles of the Lord are fought by babes with stones! King of Israel! Hear how the people cry! (*Pausing in his walk, he listens to the distant shouts: "Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands!"*) King! Harken! How the people render homage to this boy! King! (*He seizes his crown and flings it against the wall.*) King! The glory of victory belongeth to this youth! (*Pause.*) Yet am I king in truth and that shall this beardless boy know!

(*He picks up the crown and places it carefully on his head again. Enter armor bearer in evident trepidation, speaking with hesitancy.*)

ARMOR BEARER. Abner, thy brother, desires speech of thee, my lord, the king.

SAUL. Said I not unto thee that I would see no man? (*He raises his arm threateningly and the* ARMOR BEARER *retires in haste.*) King! King! Yea, the people shall know there is a king in Israel!

(*Enter* ARMOR BEARER *still more fearfully*

ARMOR BEARER. David, the son of Jesse, is without, my lord the king.

SAUL. I will not see him.

ARMOR BEARER. My lord, the king, did summon him.

SAUL. Hast thou no ears? Said I not unto thee I will not see him. Is the king of Israel to be at the beck of every shepherd who can throw a stone? He shall await my pleasure. (ARMOR BEARER *retires.*) David, the son of Jesse . . . David, the shepherd! And I have promised unto him my daughter in marriage! Truly the wrath of God abideth upon me as Samuel the prophet did foretell. Nevertheless shall this shepherd boy who hath slain Goliath with a chance stone wed the daughter of Saul? Nay, God forbid! Rather shall he die by my hands.

(*He picks up his spear and, aiming it at an imaginary foe, throws it with all his strength against the wall. With a cry of inarticulate rage, he picks up the spear, when the* ARMOR BEARER *enters.*)

ARMOR BEARER. Abdiel, the Meholothite, is without, desiring speech of my lord, the king.

SAUL. (*Mad with rage.*) Abdiel will I not see; David will I not see; Abner will I not see and thee will I see in hell if thou attend not to my word that I will see no man. (ARMOR BEARER *retires.*) Abdiel,

the Meholothite! In good time he comes! Wherefore went he not forth to fight the Philistine? Him would I gladly have given to my daughter. Coward is he and craven . . . yea, he shall have speech with me. (*Calls loudly and the* ARMOR BEARER *appears.*) Let Abdiel, the Meholothite, enter.

(*Enter* ABDIEL.)

ABDIEL. My lord, the king, did send for his servant.

SAUL. Knowest thou not, Abdiel, the son of Barzillai, that he who cometh late to the feast goeth empty away? Wherefore didst thou not fight against this Goliath? Knowest thou that to David, the son of Jesse, who hath slain this infidel, belongeth the hand of Merab, my elder daughter?

ABDIEL. Yea, my lord the king.

SAUL. Wherefore camest thou not forth to fight this dog? Thou hast asked of me the hand of my daughter in marriage and I did swear unto thee that if thou shouldst show thyself valiant and fight for me the Lord's battles thou shouldst have her to wife. Seemest it to thee a light thing to wed the daughter of the king? Cursed be thy faint heart for now shall she whom thou lovest be given to another.

ABDIEL. The will of the Lord of Hosts be done, my lord the king. The hand of Jehovah hath been heavy upon me and I have lain in my tent sick of a fever. The Almighty hath taken away from me the desire of my heart and the victory hath he given to another.

SAUL. Shall the daughter of the king be given unto him who careth for the flocks?

ABDIEL. The king hath sworn and shall perform unto the Lord his oath.

SAUL. (*Laying his hand upon his dagger, angrily.*) What the king willeth shall come to pass. I will not give my daughter to this youth.

ABDIEL. The victory is his and the fruits of victory.

SAUL. Merab shall be thine, O Abdiel, for I love thee as my son. Jehovah hath not given unto thee this victory, yet shalt thou not also lose her whom thou lovest! Slay thou this stripling by night when he resteth with his flocks and Merab shall be thine.

ABDIEL. (*Haughtily.*) Nay, my lord the king. Abdiel, the Meholothite, dealeth not treacherously by any man. I will not lift my hand to do this evil thing though the price thereof be the joy of my soul.

(SAUL, *transported with fury, springs towards* ABDIEL *who avoids him and disappears.* SAUL *in his frenzy stabs the wall again and again with his dagger. Voices are heard outside, "The evil spirit is upon him! Fetch thy harp, O son of Jesse!" The door opens softly and* DAVID, *unperceived by* SAUL, *who is at the other end of the room with his back turned, enters and begins softly playing upon his harp.* ABNER, JONATHAN *and* ABDIEL *follow* DAVID *and remain in the background.*)

SONG OF DAVID

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Jehovah;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not witholden the request of his lips.

For thou meetest him with the blessings of goodness;
Thou settest a crown of fine gold upon his head.
He asked life of thee and thou gavest it him,
Even length of days forever and ever.
His glory is great in thy salvation;
Honor and majesty doth thou lay upon him;
For thou makest him most blessed forever;
Thou makest him glad in the joy of thy presence.
For the king trusteth in Jehovah
And through the loving kindness of the Most High shall he not be moved
His right hand will find out all his enemies;
His right hand will find out those that hate him.
He will make them as a fiery furnace in the time of his anger
Those who intended evil against him,
Those who conceived a device which they were not able to perform,
He shall make them turn their back;
He shall make ready his bowstrings against their face.

(SAUL *stops in the midst of his frenzy at the first strains of the music, slowly relaxes and at length sinks upon a divan, becoming gradually calm and drinking in the music with avidity. When the song is finished he embraces* DAVID *passionately.*)

SAUL. The blessing of the Lord abideth with thee, O David, the son of Jesse, and the blessing of the king shall be thine also. Said I not that he who should slay the Philistine should have the daughter of the king to wife?

ABNER. (*Aside to* ABDIEL.) The mind of the king is like unto a whirlwind that changeth its course every instant.

SAUL. (*To* ABNER.) Bring hither Merab and Michal, my daughters. (ABNER *goes out. To* DAVID.) Thou who art favored of the Lord shalt be the son-in-

law of the king, only be thou strong and very courageous and valiant to fight Jehovah's battles. Sing, I pray thee, my son. Sing the song of Deborah!

(DAVID *sings again, "Hear, O ye kings," etc. While he is singing* ABNER *returns with* MICHAL *and* MERAB. SAUL *goes forward to meet them and leads* MERAB *to* DAVID *who, however, remains with his eyes fixed upon* MICHAL.)

ABNER. (*To* ABDIEL, *who watches with tense face.*) Be not troubled, O son of Barzillai. Michal also is fair to look upon and the daughter of the king. Doth one star differ from another star in glory?

(ABDIEL *returns no answer, but stands more rigidly.*)

SAUL. Behold, O son of Jesse, my daughter Merab. Her will I give unto thee according to my word.

DAVID. (*Shrinking from* MERAB *and turning toward* MICHAL.) Nay, who am I that I should be the king's son-in-law? But, if the king will be gracious unto me, let him give me his daughter Michal.

SAUL. (*Very angry.*) Who art thou, who, when the king offers thee a pomegranate, saith, "Give me, I pray thee, a fig?"

(SAUL *seizes a spear and throws it at* DAVID, *who avoids it.* MICHAL *throws herself on her knees before her father, and speaks to* JONATHAN *who has sprung to her side.*)

MICHAL. O my brother, let not my father lift his hand against this youth. He it is who hath saved me from the jaws of the lion.

JONATHAN. What sayest thou, my sister?

MICHAL. Seest thou not, Jonathan? It is he! The sweet singer who did watch on the hill top when we slept in the wilderness! Thou sawest not his face but on my heart it is engraved! O my father, harm him not. It is he who did save me from the jaws of the lion!

JONATHAN. There shall not a hair of his head perish! Fear not, Michal! I would lay down my life for him. (*To* SAUL.) O my father, deal not hardly with the young man. Lo, it is he who hath saved my sister from the lion when we did seek thee in the hill country. (*Strips himself of his robe and gives it to* DAVID *and his garments even to his sword and the bow at his girdle, then falls on his neck and kisses him.*) The Lord watch between thee and me and between my seed and thy seed forever. Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.

SAUL. (*Amazed.*) David, the son of Jesse! The savior of Israel! The conqueror of Goliath! The slayer of the lion! Truly the hand of the Lord is with him and he shall be blessed. The shepherd of Israel hath sent thee to me, O son of Jesse. What wilt thou of the king, the father of Michal?

DAVID. If it seem good unto thee, I pray thee, O lord, the king, to give unto me the lamb whom I have saved.

SAUL. Michal, wilt thou go with this man?

MICHAL. Yea, father; I will go with him, for it is he whom my heart desireth and he is the shepherd of my soul.

SAUL. (*Doubtfully.*) Nevertheless, it is not fitting that the younger should be given in marriage before the elder.

ABDIEL. If it seemeth good unto the king, give me, I pray thee, thy daughter Merab, that so the law may be fulfilled and our lips may praise thee forevermore.

SAUL. It shall be even as thou wilt, Abdiel, the son of Barzillai. May the God of Israel be with you and abide with you, my children.

DAVID. (*Snatching up his harp, sings.*)

Praise the Lord, O my soul;
All that is within me,
Praise his holy name, etc.

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

STORY OF THE PLAY

Saul, the son of Kish, has gone to find the asses of his father. While Jonathan and Michal, his children, are practicing at archery, Abner comes seeking Saul and bringing the tidings that the Children of Israel, afflicted by the Philistines and discontented with the ineffectual rule of the sons of Samuel, will have a king to reign over them and that Saul is the choice of the people.

Jonathan and Michal, overjoyed by the surprising news, but anxious because of their father's long absence, go to seek him in the danger-infested hill-country.

Wearied after fruitless search, they sleep among the rocks of the wilderness. David, who cares for the flocks of his father, finds them sleeping and is smitten with the surpassing beauty of Michal. Knowing the perils that lurk among the rocks, he watches. Darkness becomes complete. There is a rush of feet, a scream, a cry of "Lion! Lion!" followed by sounds of pursuit and struggle. Then silence. Dawn reveals Jonathan and David bending over Michal's unconscious form. Jonathan despairs, but David is bending over Michal as she opens her eyes. At the same moment Saul appears and David vanishes without becoming known.

Goliath, the Philistine, challenges Israel. Merab, Saul's elder daughter, prevents her lover, Abdiel, from

accepting the challenge and an unknown volunteer overcomes the giant. Michal, looking from her widow, recognizes the shepherd-harper in the successful champion and is overcome with dismay because Saul has promised his elder daughter as the reward of victory. Merab is also distressed because she loves Abdiel.

Saul, very angry that this shepherd-boy shall marry his daughter, is nevertheless bound by his promise. David, however, has also recognized Michal through the window and, in defiance of the king's offer and of the custom of the country, asks that Michal be given him instead of Merab. Saul, about to slay him in anger, is stayed by the announcement that David is the preserver of Michal from the lion.

The law is satisfied by Abdiel's proposal to marry Merab and Saul's promise is made good by the betrothal of David and Michal.

SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAMS

ACT I. SCENE ONE: Before the home of Kish in a village of Palestine. Jonathan, in preparation for joining the hosts of Israel, practices at archery, his sister, Michal, acting as armor bearer. Enter Abner asking for Saul, who is absent seeking his father's asses. Abner tells the children of the wish of the Israelites to have Saul as their king. Enter Kish, lamenting the protracted absence of Saul. Jonathan and Michal, infected by his anxiety, go in search of their father.

SCENE TWO: Wilderness of Judæa. Michal and Jonathan, having lost their way and being too

wearied to travel farther, sleep among the rocks. David, having folded his sheep in the valley, comes to the hill-top to enjoy the beauty of the night and discovers the sleeping wanderers. The moonlight reveals the loveliness of Michal, and David, knowing the dangers of the wilderness, watches near her. Under the cover of the darkness that follows the setting of the moon, a wild beast attacks Michal. David and Jonathan pursue the marauder. Dawn discovers them bending over the apparently lifeless body of Michal. Jonathan gives himself up to lamentation. David bends again over Michal as she opens her eyes. Saul appears over the hill-top at the same moment and David vanishes without making himself known.

Act II. Two years later.

Scene One: House of King Saul. Michal bemoans to Merab her inability to find the shepherd who had rescued her from death. They speak also of the Philistine, Goliath, and Merab confesses that she has given a potion to her lover, Abdiel, incapacitating him from challenging the giant. Michal indignantly avers that, could she find her shepherd, she would gladly send him against the enemy of Israel. Enter Abdiel, vehemently upbraiding Merab for her treachery to him. He is shortly followed by Jonathan who declares that a champion for Israel has been found and that Saul has promised him Merab as the reward of victory. Merab and Michal await in

anxiety the shouts that shall announce the coming of the victor and, when he is escorted through the street, Michal from her window recognizes his as her lost shepherd, who must become the husband of Merab!

Scene Two: The same. Saul, very angry that he must marry his elder daughter to a shepherd boy, summons Abdiel and reproaches him for not having challenged Goliath and suggests that he slay David. Abdiel proudly scorns such treachery and Saul attempts to kill him, but Abdiel escapes. David is sent to soothe Saul with the music of his harp. Saul, melted, relents and summons his daughters, offering Merab to David, but David, who has recognized Michal through the window, dares the anger of the king and asks for Michal. The intervention of Jonathan, who announces that David is the savior of Michal from the lion, brings about a satisfactory issue for all concerned.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERS

Michal. A girl of sixteen, full of life and fun; a child of the great out-of-doors, natural and beautiful. Her dress, the simple tunic of the Jewish people, which she retains even as a princess, though in the second act a golden girdle may be worn to indicate her rank. The sandals, too, may be ornamented with gold in the later scenes.

Merab. Aged twenty, unlike her sister delighting in gorgeous raiment. In the first scene she wears an embroidered tunic which when she becomes a

princess, is changed for one of many colors and richly ornamented. She wears also ear-rings, armlets, necklaces and anklets, and golden sandals.

JONATHAN. A boy of eighteen, a hero-worshipper, impulsive, affectionate, high-minded and courageous. He wears a tunic reaching below the knees and over this a mantle. In the last two scenes he wears the richly colored robe of a prince.

SAUL. A man in the prime of life, stern, ambitious, passionate. In the first scene he wears the drab-colored tunic of the common Jew, in the last the royal robe of a king. This may be made of purple sateen, with wide borders of cotton. His crown is a plain band of gilt cardboard; his spear is jewelled and wound with gilt paper.

ABDIEL. The lover of Merab, a warrior of renown. As a beggar, he is clad from head to foot in a black mantle, only his eyes visible. As a soldier, in the last scene, he wears a brightly colored mantle over his armor. (Armor is easily made of silver paper pasted on large sheets of cardboard, either in the shape of scales or in a solid sheet, and fitted closely to the body. A helmet may be made of the same material modelled over a close-fitting skull cap).

ABNER. Captain of the king's guard, an elderly soldier, portly, pompous, but simple and kind-hearted as a child. He wears armor and carries a sword or spear.

DAVID. A youth of eighteen, ruddy and of a fair countenance, clothed in the tunic of the

shepherd. In the first act he carries a harp, in the last, wears a sling over his shoulder and carries a shepherd's staff.

KISH. A white-bearded man, bowed down with years and grief. White-robed.

MAID, SOLDIERS, ARMOR BEARER, *wear the* Jewish tunic and sandals. Soldiers and armor bearer may wear turbans or helmets.

THE SCENERY

The Jewish house of the time of Saul was a flat-topped, one-story building, made of stones and mud and with few windows. It may be easily represented by tacking sheets of gray paper, (drying paper, such as botanists use for pressing plants) on frames.

The furnishing of the house are a rude table, stools, a divan, water jugs, and so forth. Even the house of the king was, during the reign of Saul, a very primitive place.

Managers of the real theater are exceedingly kind about lending scenery to responsible amateurs. If, however, no such scenery is available, the wilderness may be simulated by wrapping various articles of miscellaneous sizes and shapes, such as footstools, pillows or bundles of rags, in brown and gray cloth and scattering them among the larger articles of furniture, such as couches and tables, similarly covered with brown muslin or cheesecloth. If artfully done, the resemblance to a rocky desert is really impressive.

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